

Jill Insurgent

HOW A VENOMOUS LITTLE SNAKE MADE AMENDS FOR THE
MALIGNITY OF THE SERPENT WHO GOT THE FIRST
MAN AND WOMAN DRIVEN OUT OF EDEN

By Margaret Busbee Shipp

ILL had done an outrageous thing, and was perfectly happy about it—which makes it clear from the beginning that she was not the sort of person on whom sympathy should be wasted.

The project had occurred to her only that morning, when Donnell's Select Far East Tour, Ltd., had at last reached India. Jill had long since decided that "limited" meant that the party was limited to eight, not that the price was limited. It should have been "Stg," for "staggering." She had never found out to what "select" referred, beyond deciding that it couldn't be meant for the personnel. There was Jill herself; her maiden aunt, Miss Drane; her widowed aunt, Mrs. Creedmoor; a Mr. and Mrs. Bond, who resembled pieces of overstuffed furniture; and three cousins with pallid personalities and implicit faith in guidebooks.

Mr. Donnell had taken the same party, with the exception of Jill, to South America the year before. He was a master in the art of balanced attentions. If he brought Miss Drane an extra wrap, he inquired solicitously about a cousin's headache or listened to the story of the Bond calories. He was a round little man, with a smile that he used like a period at the end of each sentence; but he had begun to realize that he was a prey to alarmingly disquieting symptoms.

Jill teased him, she flouted him, she disregarded him. He went to bed every night, determining to "put her in her place," and in the morning found himself wishing only to be in the place where she was. His impartiality to all the members of his touring parties was a business asset on which he had built up his comfortable income. If a man were so driven from his established

routine as to marry an upsetting sort of person like Jill, it would be imperative that she should remain at home when one conducted midwinter expeditions. A beatific expression stole over his face as he pictured a docile Jill safely parked at home, while he searched the oriental bazaars to find treasures to bring back to her.

It was an exceedingly opportune moment for her to broach her plan.

"Mr. Donnell," she began plaintively, slipping into the seat beside him on the train, "I'm spoiling your tour, and your tour is ruining my life. Now that we've started through India with a car to ourselves, there won't be even a chance traveler to chat with, like that nice Englishman on the Ceylon boat this morning."

"On the ferry from Dhanushkodi," corrected Mr. Donnell, who was particularly exact in matters relating to transportation. "I noticed how he thrust himself upon your attention."

"He was telling me about tiger hunting. You can't imagine what a relief tigers were after an overdose of tabbies! Don't gape at me like that, please, dear Mr. Donnell! Please be sweet and understanding and human!" Jill tried to squeeze a tear, but she had no weeping habits, and gave it up as a bad job. "All my life I've longed to see India," she went on. "I want to feel saturated with it, soaked, immersed, *drowned!*"

"God bless my soul!" ejaculated poor Mr. Donnell.

He had not advertised drowning in his prospectus de luxe, but one never knew what a client might demand.

"You see, daddy let me come with my aunts because I was having such a gorgeous time at home. Seems funny, doesn't it? But he took it into his blessed head

that I might fall in love with somebody or other and marry too young. I came because I wanted to see India, but you know how it was in Java and Ceylon—like looking at all that beauty from a diet kitchen, and listening to an echo."

"Did you say kitchen?" murmured the bewildered man.

She nodded.

"You've noticed that the distant cousins are so dripping with guidebooks that one can tell beforehand whether they'll call a thing 'stereotyped' or 'spirited'? Even that is better than the everlasting talk about food — whether the milk has been boiled or merely heated, whether the soda water could possibly have been rebottled, whether the bacon is safe Australian or dangerous Indian, whether the eggs—somehow, when they begin to sniff over them, no matter how daintily, I lose my taste for curried eggs! I've got to have a breathing space. I must see a tiny corner of India on my own. If I'm meat for a girl-eating tiger or a harem-filling rajah, it's my responsibility. When the train stops at Madura, I'm going to slip off. Your plan is to go on to Madras for a rest period through Sunday, and I promise to join you there; but I'm going to hop off this train at Madura and see the great temple there all by myself, and, thank Heaven, I'll never know whether it's 'spirited' or not!"

"There is no rajah in that province," began Mr. Donnell, his literal mind seizing on the vital point.

"You perfect lamb!" cried Jill, taking this as consent—though he had not thought of consenting—and giving his arm a joyous little squeeze. Catching a distant cousin's look of disapprobation, she added a friendly pat on his sleeve. "I absolutely knew you'd stand by me!"

After such confidence in him, how could a gentleman explain that he had not intended to agree to so wild a plan?

Later on it left him to do the explaining to the aunts, who did not accept their niece's escapade at all placidly.

II

As for Jill, she promptly forgot the party, the conductor, the Indian "bearer" who took care of baggage and bedding rolls; and she hurried to the station rest house, which Mr. Donnell had told her was the best place for Americans or Europeans in Madura.

"Now this is India!" she sighed contentedly, when the tiny Eurasian woman who kept the station house led her to a bedroom opening on an upper gallery, which in turn overlooked an inclosed court swarming with pilgrims. The Eurasian tried to explain that it was the time of a great pilgrimage to Rameswaram, and that pilgrims from all over India were crowding into Madura on their way to the sacred island shrine.

When Jill came downstairs again, a native guide approached and asked in good English if she would like his services.

A few minutes later she was seated in a shabby vehicle, driven by a beturbaned driver who overcharged her—but very gently. He threaded his way through streets where brown children, small-bodied and bright-eyed, were swarming like bees. Young girl mothers were carrying babies on their hips, wee naked children were toddling about for themselves. Older ones stretched forth their hands with a purring appeal:

"Mem-sahib! Seeck, seeck!"

The guide pointed out a small temple where mothers of "seeck" children went to pray for their recovery, making votive offerings of tiny clay images; but even there caste prevailed, for the gifts of the high-caste mothers were placed on the temple roof, while the clay images of the low-caste mothers were put humbly on the ground.

Jill rather hurried through the big cream-colored palace of the last rajah, Tirumala Nayak, but she was enchanted by the beauty of Teppa Kulam, the sacred tank, with its tiny island and white towers reflected in the water.

"It is a rest house for god and goddess when they come to pay a visit," explained the guide, and Jill replied enthusiastically:

"They must drop in often, with such an adorable place to stay!"

When they reached the Great Temple of Minakshi, the Fish Mother, Jill was thrilled by her first glimpse of Dravidian architecture. The outer wall was a mammoth parallelogram, inclosing the half hundred buildings devoted to temple worship. Against the soft sky the gopuras rose eleven stories high—superb pyramidal towers ornamented with figures of gods and goddesses, heroes, bulls, elephants, horses, lions, peacocks, in bewildering and intricate profusion, all of them colored and gilded.

They entered by the gate of Minakshi's temple, where eight enormous statues were almost dismaying in their size and ugliness. Wares were offered for sale at many stalls, though there were few to buy at that hour of the afternoon. Cream-colored sacred bulls were wandering at will, now and then helping themselves, unopposed, to some tempting mouthful. A venturesome lad who tried to follow their exalted example received a sharp flick of the whip for his impudence.

Jill spent hours in happy ramblings, enchanted by the Tank of the Golden Lilies, the quaint paintings in the long arcade, the gilded domes gleaming in the sun, the Hall of a Thousand Pillars, and the great choultry built as a resting place for Sundareswara, a friendly god who dropped in for ten days once a year.

It was not until she returned to the station house that her mood of high adventure flagged. When she went into the dining room, she realized that she, a girl of nineteen, was the only white woman there. There were not many diners—some Mohammedans at a table to themselves; a young Turk, evidently of better birth than his coreligionists, who dined alone, and who cast frequent bold glances in Jill's direction; a gay group at another table, the women with light olive skins, delicate in appearance, pretty and yet somehow repellent—"the pale flowers of Eurasia."

The meal was unappetizing, and Jill was impatient to return to the temple to see the great gathering that night. As she was leaving the dining room, she came face to face with the most welcome, the most unexpected, the most comforting sight in the whole wide world—an American man. From the depths of her soul she uttered a fervent—

"Thank Heaven!"

Then she was aware that that was hardly the way to address a perfectly strange young man *en passant*, and she hurried by.

"Blue eyes, nice shoulders, white teeth, and properly cut hair! He's as American as football, or a five-and-ten-cent store, or the Washington Monument, or peach ice cream, or daddy's tastes!" her thoughts ran in a whimsical jumble.

Outside, she found her guide and the be-turbaned charioteer waiting for her.

Seeing the vast temple of the Fish-Eyed Goddess by day had not prepared Jill for the amazement of it by night. In spite of

its size, it was difficult for all the thronging thousands to gain entrance.

"It will be needed to have some one to help me," stated the guide.

Without waiting for Jill's assent, he spoke deferentially to a man standing near the entrance—a thin, ragged man, with burning eyes in a dark, ascetic face.

The newcomer went in front of them, with a small whip flicking the legs of boys who tried to crowd too near. He managed the whip dexterously, for Jill noticed that the thumb of his right hand was missing. It must have been caused by a painful accident, for there was a deep, ugly scar across his fingers.

The guide led the way to the Door of One Thousand Lamps, outlined with that number of tiny receptacles for oil, each with its twinkling lighted taper. Beyond the doors of the two adyta only those of the Hindu faith were permitted to go. Jill watched pilgrims circling nine times around the Shrine of the Nine Planets, and others making obeisance to the hind quarters of a bronze bull, slick and shining with grease.

Then the guide showed her the heroic statue of a goddess to whom mothers brought sick babies and made propitiatory offerings of butter. The pats of butter were thrown at the statue, so that she was smeared with offerings, and stood ankle deep in rancid butter.

"What a frightful smell!" exclaimed Jill.

"If the odor be sweet to the great goddess, it cannot be evil," returned the guide suavely. It seemed to Jill as if he shot a warning glance toward the thumbless man. "But we will return to the Mandapam of One Thousand Pillars, which many English people like best by night."

That part of the temple was not crowded, and Jill took a deep breath of enjoyment as she stood again in the pillared grove.

Pointing out an ancient bas-relief of a man cutting off a little girl's head with a sword, the guide explained:

"Once, when a man wanted sons, he might offer his first daughter to the gods, and they would give him many sons; but now no more, since the English came. And no more sati. Hindu women like sati. What can she do? She must not marry again; but the English will not permit sati."

Jill's eyes opened wide in surprise as she asked in her impetuous fashion:

"Are you really sorry that the terrible

suttee is abolished? And do you really believe that murdering girl babies could please idols?"

This time there was no doubt of the look of fear which the guide threw at the thumbless whip bearer, or of the gesture which implored Jill to be silent; but it was too late. The thumbless man wheeled around. Fury or fanaticism distorted his face. His eyes blazed at her like live coals. Then he spoke for the first time, in excellent English, and in a voice which sounded as dead as it was sinister:

"We do not know the word 'idol' in India. Does the English lady refer to the great gods? As she is not pleased here, perhaps one of her race would be more interested in the obscene statues. It is permitted to see them."

"How dare—" Jill stopped, her throat choking. Then she said to the guide, keeping her self-control by a tremendous effort: "I will now return to the station rest house. Pay this man off, please."

She handed the guide a note for five rupees; but when he in turn gave it to the other, the thumbless man threw it on the floor, spat on it, and in another moment was lost in the maze of columns.

"He is a very holy man, and you have angered him." The guide spoke sullenly. "It was not good, Miss Sahiba."

Jill's own hot temper was aroused by the beggar's insolence.

"Holy? He's the most abominable creature I ever saw!"

The guide was silent a moment, and then answered in his deliberate voice:

"It is that you do not understand. He is a man of Amritsar, who gave up great wealth and chose the path of poverty. You have heard of Amritsar, the golden city of the Pool of Immortality? He had gone one day to the temple, and when he returned he saw the son of his brother in the park of Jallianwala Bagh. As he went to speak with him, the firing began. The son of his brother was killed at his side, but he lost only a thumb. He had done no wrong, but because other men had done very wicked wrong to an English lady, he, too, was made to crawl like a snake. He could not leave his home without passing the Place of Humiliation, because his door opened on that street. He had to crawl on his belly when he went out of his own door; and so his heart burns against all English mem-sahibs."

"But I'm an American!"

"It is the same talk, the same gods, the same race; and because of one of them he was made to crawl on his belly."

"That order was revoked—I remember reading that it made a great stir at the time," Jill said thoughtfully, her anger evaporated. "I'm sorry I hurt his feelings. Do you think he has lost his mind?"

The guide was busy making a passage for her through the crowd, and he seemed not to hear. Never more alone than in the midst of the alien multitudes, Jill was thankful to regain the cleanness of the night air outside the temple.

III

THEY made their way to where the driver had been told to wait, but he was nowhere to be seen.

"He has gone," announced the guide imperturbably. "He must have had need of sleep. Miss Sahiba will have to walk. Look out for the legs, for the way is not excellent in the dark."

Dark indeed it was—so dark that if a man should walk up behind—

"I don't wish to walk," Jill declared, trembling in spite of herself.

"Yet if there is no carriage, not even a tonga?" suggested the guide.

"I have a carriage waiting, and I'll be delighted if you'll let me have the pleasure of taking you back."

It was the American who stepped out of the darkness.

"Oh, thank you a million times—at least that much!" cried Jill, relief making her smile a dazzling thing.

She gave the guide his fee and a generous *pourboire* as well. Very low came his whisper, hardly a breath of sound:

"Lock fast your windows to-night, Miss Sahiba!"

"How did you happen to come in the very nick of time?" Jill asked the American, as they drove off together.

"Somehow I thought there might possibly be a nick. After I passed you at the door, I saw the Eurasian woman who runs the place, and she told me you were traveling alone, without even a bearer. You've more grit than discretion, if you'll let me give an unasked opinion—especially in a place like Madura, where the population is nearly all native. When she told me you had gone to one of their Friday night jam-

borees, I decided to follow, but I didn't mean to thrust myself upon your notice unless something seemed to justify it."

He paused a moment, and then said frankly:

"Let's put all the cards on the table. I was standing near your carriage when a fakir or beggar hurried up and spoke sharply to your driver, and the old scout with the turban drove off. He spoke in Hindustani, so I couldn't understand."

"Could you see his face? Were his eyes bright and deep-set?"

"I didn't notice in the dim light, but I did notice, when he beckoned to your driver, that he had no thumb."

Jill drew a long breath of relief.

"I simply can't thank you enough for looking after me!"

"I don't deserve any thanks," he confessed. "I've been in this hole nearly a month, and you're the first girl from home I've seen in that time, so naturally I didn't wish to lose sight of you."

"A month here? Why, I should think you could see it in two days."

He laughed over that.

"Two days would give me time to spare. You see, I've been in the Malay States, at Kuala Lumpur. There's a wedge-shaped rubber plantation sticking into one we lease, and it has caused a lot of friction and a lot of trouble. We wanted to lease it from the old Indian who owns it, and I came here to see him about it. After a month of dillydallying he has finally consented. I'm giving him much more than I was authorized to do at first, and every cent that it's worth to-day, but not as much as it will be worth next year, so we are both satisfied. I hope the directors will be."

It was characteristic of him not to mention that his father was a high official in the company, and that the commission given him was an important undertaking for a man of his age. Instead, he was telling her a story of snipe hunting in the paddy fields when they reached the station house.

Its lights were reassuring, its very pilgrims comforting as they lay huddled in sleep on ground or courtyard or steps. Jill had started to say she was afraid, but checked the impulse. After all, if there had been any danger, it was over now.

The two young Americans walked upstairs together to the balcony which opened off the bedrooms.

"My room is only three doors beyond yours. If you happen to need anything, call me," he said. "You'll let me see you in the morning? Is there anything you want to-night?"

"Will you please ask your bearer to order a bottle of soda water sent to my room? I forgot it when I was downstairs, and I hate to step over all these balcony sleepers again. I'm so glad you got the rubber plantation you wanted! Good night!"

After a servant brought the bottle of water, Jill undressed and bolted her windows carefully, as well as her door. At the back of the bedroom there was a primitive sort of bathroom — really a part of the room, as there was no partition between, though the floor was at a slightly lower level. It contained a big earthenware jar filled with water, a small pitcher, and other toilet necessities of the crudest type. To take a bath, one stood on the floor—made of some sort of native brick or tiling—and tossed the water over one from the small pitcher. The water gradually drained out through a hole in one corner. The bathroom had a window which opened on a narrow back gallery, and Jill bolted it fast.

As she opened the bottle of soda water, she thought amusedly of her aunts' nightly discussion over the possibility of the bottle having been refilled. Smiling at the recollection, she poured out a fizzing tumblerful —too full, for some of it splashed on her pretty negligee. In an instant the spots turned a deep yellow.

"Curious!" thought the girl. "I must have splashed water on it before, and it's never been discolored like that."

She deliberately made a larger spot and watched it turn that queer metallic yellow. Then she put the bottle down, went to the water jar, and cupped up a handful of water to wet the garment. It merely looked wet; there was not the slightest change of color.

"That bottle has been tampered with, all right," Jill thought shakily. Then she pulled herself together. "Nonsense! Imagine anybody trying to poison me! But I won't blow out the light, hot as it is."

IV

THE only light in the room was an oil lamp, which Jill put in the bathroom, so that it would not twinkle in her eyes. Then she laid down on the bed, but it was too hot

to sleep. Even in February the heat was stifling. The punkah hung idle overhead, for she had not known that she should have engaged a punkah coolie to keep it going all night.

In spite of her uneasiness, youth and a tired body asserted their claim, and she was dropping off to sleep when there came a sound like a tiny puff of wind. She had felt no air stirring, but her lamp was out. Perhaps she had put it too near the window, or perhaps some one had blown it out through a chink in the shutters, though she had closed and bolted them as tight as she could.

Sleep was banished. Hours lagged by. She turned and tossed as the heat became unendurable in the close room. Though she would not dare to drink from the earthenware jar in the bathroom, at least she could splash some water on her face and neck for coolness.

Slipping her hand under her pillow, she took out her flash light. It was one of the many conveniences in the traveling bag that her father had fitted out as a steamer gift. Darling daddy, a million million miles away! A sob of homesickness caught her throat as she flashed on her light and started to the bathroom.

Was it a narrow belt—that little length of unobtrusive brown?

It seemed suddenly to ripple toward her. She rushed back to the bed and jumped upon it, her wide, terrified eyes staring at the cold, unblinking ones in the vicious gray head.

Jill was no coward. She had been brought up in the creed of good sportsmanship. There was nothing near at hand but an ivory-backed brush on the bedside table. She hurled it at the snake. Golf and tennis had made her aim straight, and her missile grazed the reptile's tail, but it was too light to do any harm.

Then, unmistakably, there came a clear musical call, like the note of a reed instrument, and in a twinkling the tiny snake had vanished through the drain in the corner of the bathroom.

Of course, it might come back at any moment. How long would her flash light burn before it burned out? She had to risk it. Flesh and blood could not endure the darkness closing in on her again.

She watched the hole through which the snake had gone, fearing that at any second the wicked gray head would reappear.

Glancing at her wrist watch, she saw that it was only a quarter past two. The night had many hours to run. She felt as if hidden eyes were watching her from some chink, as it was from the balcony beyond the bathroom that the flutelike call had summoned the snake. She drew on her negligee again. She was no longer in need of the punkah; in spite of the heat, her body was shivering with icy fear.

An interminable time dragged by. Again she glanced at her watch—only twenty minutes had passed. It seemed to her that the flash light was dimmer, was flickering somewhat. She must safeguard her light, and she switched it off.

God, what blackness! There stole to her mind the "Jungle Book" story she had often read to her younger brothers. Before the mongoose tackled Nag, the cobra, he fought with Karait, "the dusty brown snakeling whose bite is as dangerous as the cobra's, but he is so small that nobody thinks of him"—Karait, who boasted in his tiny voice:

"Be careful! I am death!"

Over and over, staring into the darkness, Jill felt as if she could hear the little length of pale brown taunting her:

"I am death!"

Presently there came a new sound, a mere ghost of a sound, different from the regular breathing of the sleeping pilgrims on the balcony. This was at the bathroom window—a sound as of something grating.

Again she flashed on her light. Through the blinds of the closed window there penetrated a fine copper wire, with one end bent into a hook. It caught at the primitive fastening and raised it slightly, but not quite strongly enough to lift the latch.

Jill tried to scream, but only a throaty "Help, help!" escaped her. Outside, one of the sleeping pilgrims muttered something, probably an objurgation on the person who was disturbing his slumbers.

Rigid with fear, her gaze was fixed on the copper wire as it caught the latch more securely, and slowly lifted it. Through the aperture maimed fingers stole in and raised the bolt.

Jill turned and fled through her door, unbolting it and leaving it wide flung, stumbling over huddled sleepers as she ran madly to the third door.

It was not locked, and she rushed in and stood there, panting. Her flash light fell upon the American, fast asleep, his punkah

going smoothly and regularly, making a mechanical breeze. He opened his eyes drowsily, and looked at her as if not comprehending. Then recognition dawned. He sat up quickly.

"What's the trouble?"

Something dormant in Jill seemed to be stirred to life by that blessedly matter-of-fact question. There were other questions a man might readily have put to a strange girl, coming into his room at that hour of the night.

Her teeth chattered as she tried to explain:

"The water turned yellow, and then a snake came, the little one who says: 'I am death.' And he called it back to him, and then he tried to get through my window. The thumbless man—"

"That's all right—he can't follow you here," the American soothed. "Don't think of him any more. That beggar got on your mind, and you had a bad nightmare. You did right to come to me. I'll take care of you." He spoke as to a frightened child. "Lie down on the bed, now, and go to sleep. You need it. I'll look after you. See, I'll light my lamp again, and sit by the window and watch. Now lie down, and don't say another word. Just keep your thoughts on the punkah, swaying, swaying—"

The reaction was like a drug. Jill did exactly as she was told to do—closed her eyes, let the burden of the night watch fall on the American, felt the breeze from the punkah stirring her hair.

V

It was broad daylight when she opened her eyes again. The American, fully dressed, was standing over her. He smiled comfortingly at her.

"Feel a bit rested? No!" he warned with a quick lift of his hand. "No, don't try to talk about last night until after you've had your coffee. My bearer has your chota hazri ready for you. He will bring your things to you here, and while you're having coffee, he'll pack up the rest of your stuff. There's an early train, and I want you to take it rather than wait for the three-o'clock one. I'll run up to Madras with you, if you'll let me. You don't wish to stay here any longer?"

"No, no!" She trembled violently. "Let's go from this awful place as soon as we can!"

With the clear light of a new day, hot coffee, and her companion's good humor, Jill herself began to wonder if her fears had not exaggerated the happenings of the night before. Still, she was thankful to be on the train for Madras. She was seated by the open window, leaning to catch a last glimpse of gopura or gilded dome against the sky, and to watch the shifting crowds.

"Don't you love the color of the women's veils?" she asked.

"Call this color? Wait till you get to a native state. At Jaipur you'll see women wearing rose, green, saffron, orange, peacock blue—tell me some more colors. I've given out. Why, a kaleidoscope is drab in comparison! We seem to be moving. These English trains start impercept—"

The word was never finished.

Something whizzed through the window, missing Jill's gay little hat by a fraction of an inch—a very small fraction. Perhaps the movement of the train accounted for the failure in marksmanship; perhaps it was because it was difficult to throw accurately with a missing thumb.

Now it was the man who was speechless, his face as white as paper.

"I believe I'm impervious." Jill managed a shaky smile. "It *was* poison in the bottle, for the holes look burned; and the snake was a tiny gray and brown thing, but he looked wicked."

"A krait. My bearer's child was killed by the bite of one."

His words came stumblingly.

He thought how childlike she had looked as she lay in that deep sleep on his bed; how utterly she had trusted herself to him.

"You trusted me"—his voice broke—"and I dismissed your fears as a particularly mean nightmare. What wretched care I took of you! What damn fool optimism to think there was no danger because I hadn't chanced to run across any! The man was either a fanatic or a lunatic—result about the same to you, if he had made up his mind that you were to die. We nearly killed you between us!"

He stooped and picked up the dagger. It was a Nepalese kukri, marvelously wrought, with its damascened blade depicting horses and elephants in a hunting scene, and its ivory hilt yellow with age.

"Don't touch the blade—it may be poisoned. I'll take it to a chemist I know in Madras, and have it made harmless."

"You'll have to face something in Madras more terrifying than a chemist," she challenged, trying to turn his thoughts, though she liked him none the less for his concern over her. "How am I to meet Mr. Donnell's Select Tour, Ltd., bringing as my sheaf a perfectly strange young man whose name I don't know?"

"Part of that is quickly remedied. I'm John Kent, but my friends all call me Jack."

She stared at him as if he were the solitary man from the United States who had ever been called by the unusual name of Jack. She was not given to blushing, and she felt confused by the sudden rush of warm blood to her cheeks. Her nimble tongue faltered as she returned:

"I'm Juliet Drane. *My* friends call me Jill."

His look was more eloquent than words. Then he put a businesslike question:

"Which way do you go back?"

She answered formally:

"P. and O. from Bombay. I do hate a

P. and O., they're so stiff and formal and high hat!"

"I'll change my passage. The stiffer the other passengers are, the more I'll like 'em," he declared cheerfully, "for it will give me a better chance to see you—that is, if you'll let me come, Jill. I'm sorry that in the moment's excitement I seem to have misplaced your surname."

At that very moment poor Mr. Donnell, in the aunts' black books for having countenanced Jill's foolish escapade, was determining positively that such an upsetting young woman must be left at home on future tours, though he would always bring back handsome souvenirs—very handsome.

But hardly as unusual as a Nepalese kukri with an ivory hilt, wrought centuries ago by a master craftsman; nor was anything that Mr. Donnell was dreaming any wilder than what Jack was saying to Jill as the train pulled into Madras—that if once a serpent had driven a man and woman out of Eden, the little krait had made handsome amends!
